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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VILNIUS 000049

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [LH](#)  
SUBJECT: LITHUANIA PUSHES FOR SPECIAL OPS TRAINING CENTER  
IN LITHUANIA

Classified By: DCM Damian R. Leader for reasons 1.4.(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Commander of U.S. Special Forces in Europe (SOCEUR) MajGen Frank Kisner met with the Lithuanian National Security Advisor-equivalent Jonas Markevicius and the Vice Minister of National Defense Vytautas Umbrasas in separate meetings December 16 in Vilnius. Both Lithuanians expressed support for the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan but were concerned about what effects the increased activity in the South and East will have in the West, specifically Ghor province, where Lithuania leads the PRT. The Lithuanian officials also discussed the initiative to establish a Special Forces training facility here in Lithuania. The current plan is to start building the facility and decide later whether or not to label it a "NATO" center. End Summary.

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Presidential Advisor Jonas Markevicius  
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¶2. (C) Markevicius expressed appreciation for this year's Special Forces (SOF) program, most notably the NATO SOF exercise 'Jackal Stone 2010' which will take place in Lithuania. He also asked MajGen Kisner about the future of SOF training facilities, and requested his opinion on the Lithuanian initiative to build a NATO SOF Center of Excellence here in Lithuania. Markevicius stressed the importance of a visible NATO presence, even though the U.S.-Lithuania bilateral relationship is excellent. He also expressed a desire to establish a "listed" or recurring NATO exercise in Lithuania.

¶3. (C) MajGen Kisner replied that as he understood it, a proposed SOF facility would be an international training center and commented that other countries have similar plans. He said he would direct his staff to study the Lithuanian plans to see how other countries would use the facility and how Lithuania would charge to operate the center. Kisner also advised that it would be very difficult to get NATO consensus for a listed exercise here and also that if it were established, non-NATO nations may be excluded from participating, a fact that might contribute to the difficulty in consensus building. He noted that U.S.-organized SOF exercises allow more flexibility and are easier to establish.

¶4. (C) Markevicius also asked about the impact that increased ISAF SOF would have in conjunction with the push for increasing the civilian force operating in Afghanistan. Kisner answered by pointing out the core tasks of SOF include providing military assistance and training, not just security, which goes hand-in-hand with civilian initiatives. Markevicius then commented that Lithuania was especially looking forward to the initiative to increase civilian development, international cooperation, and help Afghanistan build better governance, however Lithuania sees funding as the biggest challenge in shifting from military to civilian

control in their own PRT operations in Ghor. He added however that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has recently appointed a lead coordinator, Valdas Sarapinas, who has a good knowledge of SOF capabilities.

15. (C) Markevicius closed by expressing President Grybauskaite's strong support for President Obama's strategy in Afghanistan and ensured MajGen Kisner that Lithuania would continue supporting the ISAF mission as much as they are able.

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Vice Minister of MoD Vytautas Umbrasas  
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16. (C) SOCEUR MajGen Frank Kisner also met with the Lithuanian Vice Minister of National Defense Vytautas Umbrasas, who thanked the U.S. for its continued support for Lithuanian Special Forces and for the opportunity to participate in the upcoming Jackal Stone exercise 2010. Umbrasas stressed in particular his appreciation for the construction of tactical operation buildings through the use of Exercise Related Construction funds. He also informed MajGen Kisner of Lithuania's initiative to build a world class international Special Forces training center and would appreciate any U.S. assistance in doing so. MajGen Kisner responded his plan is to send members of his staff to Lithuania in the near future to study the issue and look for specific ways the U.S. could provide assistance.

17. (C) Umbrasas also voiced strong support for U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, however he expressed dismay that Lithuanian forces were not able to accomplish what other allies are

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doing in Afghanistan due to a lack of funding. For instance, Lithuania is unable to fund and distribute personal protection gear to Afghan Security Forces. Umbrasas also asked for MajGen Kisner's personal opinion on what impact the "push" in Southern and Eastern Afghanistan would have in Western provinces including Ghor, where Lithuania leads a PRT.

18. (C) MajGen Kisner replied that he will do what he can to gain support from U.S. Central Command to have that type of gear available to Lithuanians to distribute as necessary. On related effects of the "push" in the South and East, he said the immediate effort is to go where the highest threat is. Any impact in the West or North would be dealt with as necessary.

19. (C) Director the Ministry of National Defense Euro-Atlantic Cooperation Department, Saulius Gasiunas, also at the meeting, asked whether there was an advantage to having Special Forces (SOF) as a separate branch in the structure of Lithuania's military. MajGen Kisner replied that force structure is a national decision, and that he has witnessed other countries operate their SOF in different ways and with different levels of success. He did add however that SOF is "special" and one factor to study is whether have SOF as a separate branch gives them more flexibility in available resources, as opposed to having them under the Land component.

110. (C) Comment: It was during the Umbrasas meeting that Embassy first heard that Lithuania was no longer billing the SOF training center as an initiative for a "NATO Center of Excellence." Previously, Lithuanian Defense Ministry officials had submitted a white paper with a concept to build a SOF Center of Excellence and were lobbying for U.S. and NATO funds. In the previous meeting, Jonas Markevicius discussed the center specifically under a NATO banner but he may not have been properly briefed on the current LITSOF thinking.

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